

Setting the Standard

Opportunities and Challenges for Smart Growth Overlay Districts

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A Guidebook to Design Standards

- The Commonwealth is preparing a “Guidebook” to help our communities draft new design standards for “40R” Smart Growth Zoning Overlay Districts.
- The new regulations provide a very new approach to ensuring the “fit” between new development and communities.



A Guidebook to Design Standards

- The Guidebook is being prepared with the **advice, input and assistance of many people** and will be available within a few months
- The Cecil Group is providing assistance from the **vantage point of practical experience creating and applying design standards** and guidelines

...this presentation contains some observations about the special opportunities and challenges associated with the new design standards...



Standards vs. Guidelines ...

- Compliance with 40 R standards will be mandatory
- “Guidelines” are more typically employed to provide guidance and be a basis for negotiated compliance



Design Standards for As-of-Right Development ...

- Most 40R Zoning Districts will establish **as-of-right** development characteristics— particularly the density, types and mixes of uses.
- The state's new regulations **allow communities to create and apply their own design standards** to development in these districts.

...the keys to understanding this new mechanism can be found in the regulations at **760CMR 59.04(3)** ...



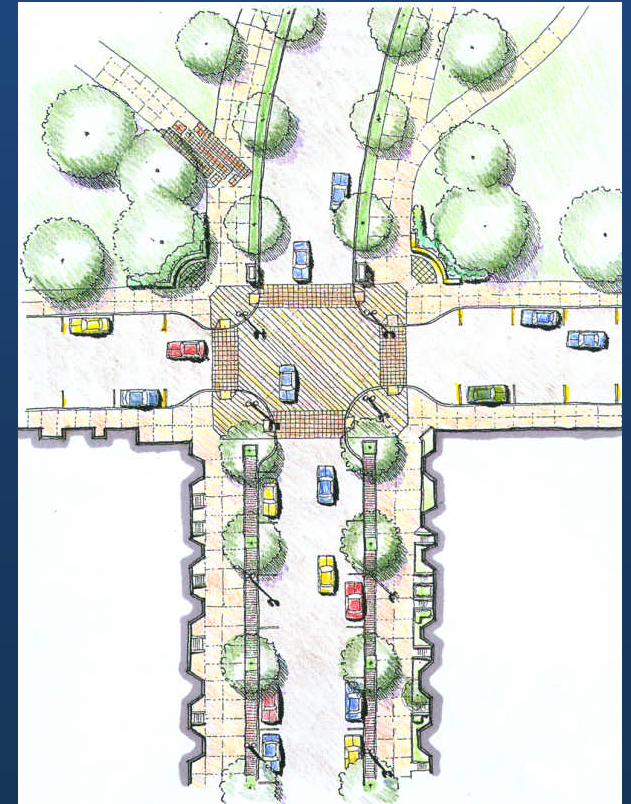
Categories for Standards ...

- Scale, proportions, and exterior appearance of buildings
- Placement, alignment, width, and grade of streets and sidewalks



Categories for Standards ...

- Type and location of infrastructure
- Location of building and garage entrances
- Off-street parking



Categories for Standards ...

- Protection of significant natural site features
- Location and design of on-site open spaces, landscaping
- Exterior signs
- Buffering



Keys to Drafting Effective Standards ...

Accent colors and elements subject to design standards

Brick or stone



Articulate
building
elevation

Metal and wood for
storefronts

Large
storefront
openings

Continuous horizontal
band element for signage

Keys to Drafting Effective Standards ...

- Are they needed?
- Are they clear?
- Can they be objectively confirmed?
- Do they provide reasonable flexibility?
- Are they consistent with zoning and other regulations?